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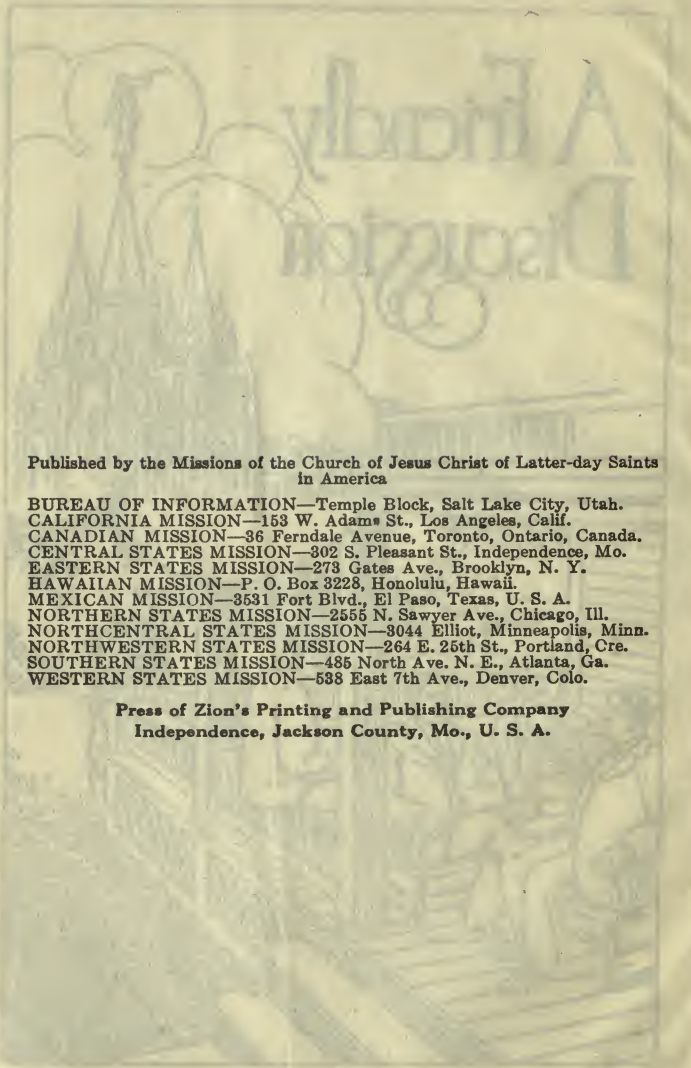


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Rich, Benjamin Ernest

A Friendly Discussion





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A FRIENDLY DISCUSSION

Upon Religious Matters

Compiled from a Work Entitled "Mr. Durant of Salt Lake City," by Ben E. Rich

This pamphlet is written in the form of a conversational discussion, because in this style information to the reader can be conveyed by a method that is at once simple and agreeable.

The scene of this narrative is a small town in the southwestern part of Tennessee, which we shall call Westminster. In this pretty village is a home of entertainment for strangers. It can scarcely be termed a hotel as it partakes largely of the character of a private residence with accommodations for a limited number of guests, and visitors are attracted to it by its homelike characteristics. A planter named Marshall was the proprietor of the premises, which was known as Harmony Place.

At the particular time of which we write (Sept., 189—), the house had three guests—a lawyer named Brown, who had selected Westminster as a place favorable for the establishment of the practice of his profession; a physician named Slocum, who had a similar intention, and a clergyman named Fitzallen, a tourist who was traveling in the pursuit of health and pleasure.

At this time another visitor made his appearance. He was an attractive looking man, aged about thirty, with genial manners and a striking clear method of presenting his thoughts in the course of conversation. This was Charles Durant, who hailed from the West.

The evening of the first day that marked the stranger's advent into Westminster saw the entire personnel of Harmony Place on the veranda.

One subject after another was taken up, discussed and disposed of, or at least laid aside to give way to some other. The conversation proceeded from point to point until the topics of the quiet gathering assumed more the aspect of an intelligent melange

than anything else. Two subjects which agitate us nationally and sometimes locally more than any other—politics and religion—had so far escaped; they had not, however, been unthought of, and presently the latter was begun by the minister saying:

“Representing to some extent, as I do, the church, I am pleased to be able to state that in the matters of organization, discipline and places of worship, America is thoroughly Christianized.”

“I partially concur with you,” said the lawyer, “and yet I belong to no church at all—do not, in fact, endorse Christianity as a department of civilized life.

“Why, how is this?” said Fitzallen, “I thought nearly everybody in this country must be orthodox to some extent, at least.”

“Not so with me, I assure you,” the other replied, “and the strange part of it is, that my views are the result of investigation and the peculiar explanations of those who make religious teaching their calling. Those who accept the creeds which are supposed to base their tenets upon the Bible, do not, it appears to me, live up to their professions, and the clergy—no offense intended—are more addicted to money-getting than soul-saving.”

The stranger from the West was listening to all this with the air of one deeply interested. It was as if a desired opportunity had come, and he was not reluctant about replying when questioned as to his own views. It came when the churchman, after announcing his determination to “labor” with the infidel, turned to the newcomer and said:

“I do not know whether you will be for or against me in this discussion, but as you come from what we of the East are prone to regard as the land where restraints are not severe, I presume you are disposed to assist him rather than me.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said Durant, “this topic interests me, and while I and my opinions are unknown to you all, I will, if agreeable to you, endeavor to throw some light upon the subject. I am a believer in religion and lay claim to a testimony of the truth of the Gospel of Christ from a divine source, and yet I often find myself opposed by ministers.”

“I cannot imagine why this should be the case,” said Fitzallen, “if you are, as you state, a true believer in Christ and have a witness of him.”

"If you will permit me to ask a few questions during your conversation with Mr. Brown, I may be able to take a general part in the discussion, provided, however, that should we differ upon any point it will be in a friendly manner."

"Certainly," said the clergyman, "I am sure it will be a pleasure to me to have you join in our conversation, and I do not doubt that Mr. Brown and the other gentlemen feel the same way."

The entire party expressed approval of the proposed interchange of opinions.

"Then, Mr. Brown," said Fitzallen, "what particular part of the Christian faith appears to you as being the most difficult to understand?"

"I confess there are many. However, let us commence with one of the principles of your belief. I will refer to some of the literature of the Church of England. The first article of religion contained in the Church of England Prayer-Book is: 'There is but one living and true God, everlasting; without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible; and in the unity of this Godhead there are three persons of one substance, power and eternity—the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost.' According to this, then, your belief is that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one person, without body, parts or passions."

"You have certainly quoted correctly from the prayer-book; I fail to see anything wrong with that. What fault have you to find with it?"

"I cannot form a conception of a God who has neither body, parts nor passions. So far as the Bible is concerned, I fail to see from what part of that book you derive such a conclusion."

"Well, Mr. Brown, using your own language, 'so far as the Bible is concerned,' let us do as Isaiah commands, 'go to the law and the testimony' (Isaiah viii:20) and I will soon convince you that the Bible plainly sets forth the fact that the Father and the Son are one. In fact, Jesus himself declares that he and his Father are one. (John x:30.) Is this not true?"

"Excuse me," said Durant, "but is it not more reasonable for us to believe that he meant that he and his Father are united in all things as one person?—not that they are actually one and the same identity?"

"Certainly not," said the reverend, "our Savior meant just what he said when he declared that he and his Father were one."

"I differ from you," said the stranger, "for he also asked his Father to make his disciples one, even as he and the Father were one, as you will see by reference to John xvii:20 and 21, and by your argument it must have been his wish for those disciples to lose their separate and distinct identities."

"Stranger," said Mr. Brown, "your view of the case, I must confess, appears reasonable."

"Let me ask," said the preacher, "did not Jesus say, 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father?' " (John xiv:9.)

"Yes," said the Westerner, "for as Paul says, 'He was in the express image of his (Father's) person' (Heb. i:3), and this being the case, Jesus might well give them to understand that when they had seen one they had seen the other. When Jesus went out to pray, he said, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' (Matt. xxvi:39.) Now, then, to whom was our Savior praying? Was he asking a favor of himself?"

"Oh, no; he was then praying to the Holy Spirit."

"By such admission you have separated one of the three from Jesus, for in the beginning you declared that the three were one; and now that we have one of the three separated from the others, let us see if we can separate the other two. In order to do this, I refer you to the account of the martyrdom of Stephen. While being stoned to death he looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and that Jesus was standing on the right hand of God. (Acts vii:55.) Would it not be impossible for a person to stand on the right hand of himself? In further proof that Jesus is a separate person from the Father we will examine the account of his baptism. On coming up out of the water, what was it that lighted on him in the form of a dove?" (Matt. iii:16.)

"We are told it was the Spirit of God."

"Exactly! And whose voice was it that spoke from the heavens, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!' (Matt. iii:17.) Now, mind you, there was Jesus, who had just been raised from the water, being one person, the Holy Ghost which descended from above and rested upon him in the form of a dove, making two personages; and does not the idea strike you very forcibly that

the voice from heaven belonged to a third person? And then again I will draw your attention to—”

The churchman was getting heated. Said he: “These are things which we are not expected to understand; and, my young friends, I would advise you to drop such foolish ideas for—”

“Excuse me. Did you say ‘foolish ideas?’ Why, my dear sir; we are told in the Bible that ‘This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.’ (John xvii:3.) Therefore it should be our first duty to find out the character and being of God. You say we are not expected to understand these things, while the Bible says these are what we must understand if we desire eternal life. It also says we can understand the things of man by the spirit of man, but to comprehend the things of God we must have the Spirit of God; and as you profess to be one of his servants, you are presumed to be in possession of the necessary light to understand the true and living God, also Jesus Christ whom he sent. You say God has no body; did our Savior have one? If so, then his Father had one, for I have just proved by the words of Paul that Christ was in the express image of his person. (Heb. i:3.) Jesus appeared in the midst of his disciples after his resurrection with a body of flesh and bones, and called upon his disciples to satisfy themselves on this point by touching him; ‘for,’ says he, ‘a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.’ (Luke xxiv:39.) Then he called for something to eat and he did eat (verses 42, 43), and with this tangible body he ascended into heaven and stood, as Stephen says, on the right hand of God. (Acts vii:55.) Now if he has no body, what became of the one he took away with him?”

“This is nonsense! You know that God is a spirit, and I think we would better not delve too deeply into matters which we are not permitted to comprehend.

“Pray listen a while longer, for I have yet more to say in regard to what you call nonsense, although, if it be such, I must insist that it is Bible nonsense. You say God is a spirit; does that prove he has no body? We are also told we must worship him in spirit. Am I to understand from this that we must worship him without a body? Have you a spirit? Yes. Have you also a body? Yes. Were you made in the image of God, body and spirit? So says the Bible. Man was created in the image of God.

(Gen. i:26, 27.) Then God has a body and, consequently, must have parts. Moses talked with him face to face, as one man talks with another (Ex. xxxiii:11), and he also saw his back parts. He promised (Num. xii:8) to speak with Moses mouth to mouth. We are told in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy that he has a hand and arm. The Psalm (cxxxix:16) tells us he has eyes, and Isaiah (xxx:27) says he has lips and tongue. John describes his head, hair, and eyes. (Rev. i:14.) And as for passions, we are told in the Bible that he exercises love and is a jealous God. Are these not parts and passions? It would appear that all who believe in the Scriptures must conclude that they are parts and passions, and that the Creator is a God after whose likeness we are made."

"Well, I had no idea when I commenced this conversation with Mr. Brown that I was to find such an antagonist in yourself. One would naturally come to the conclusion that you have made the Bible a study."

"I have as a Christian studied the record; in fact, at a very early age my parents required me to commit and remember a very important verse in that good old book. It is found in the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, being the 39th verse, and reads as follows: 'Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.'"

"That is proper, but I must again warn you against plunging into mysteries which we cannot understand."

"But Peter tells us that 'no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation' (II Peter i:20), and these are the things which we should seek for information upon; for lack of information by the ministers upon these points is, to a great extent, the cause of many persons being in Mr. Brown's frame of mind today."

"If your assertion be correct, perhaps it would be better for me to withdraw and leave Mr. Brown in your hands."

"I beg your pardon," said Durant, "I did not mean to offend you; I will endeavor to be more careful during the rest of the conversation."

"We will resume the discussion at another time. Tonight I only intended remaining a short time, having an important engagement; so if you will excuse me, I will wish you all good evening."

"Well," said Mr. Brown, "things have taken a very peculiar turn. I seem to be out of the contest. I have heard more that appears reasonable from you, Mr. Durant, regarding religion than ever before in my life, and I must also admit that if my early teaching on religious matters had been of this character, I believe I would have been a Christian. I am somewhat familiar with the doctrines of different Christian societies, and from the way you express yourself regarding the personality of God, I would like very much to hear your views regarding other differences. Do you disagree with these ministers very much on other principles?"

"I am afraid the difference on many important principles is just as great as that concerning the personality of God. But if you really desire to go with me in this search after the kingdom of God, and the others are willing, I assure you it will give me great pleasure."

Unanimous approval was expressed at once, and Mr. Brown continued, saying:

"I never before had as great a desire in this direction, and must confess that my curiosity has become quite aroused."

"Then," said Durant, "We will take King James' translation of the Scriptures as the law-book, and 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God' for our text; and if we should discover before we have finished that the teachings of men differ greatly from the teachings of Christ, I will be somewhat justified in saying that religionists have 'transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.' " (Isaiah xxiv:5; Jer. ii:13.)

"Very well," said Mr. Brown, "I will proceed," and obtaining the family Bible he continued: "And should your assertions prove correct, it would account for the increase of infidelity, and it might also cause others as well as myself to stop and consider. Now, then, to the 'law and testimony.' Give me the chapter and verse, that I may know you make no mistakes."

The doctor then for the first time took part, saying: "I am also becoming very much interested, and think I shall join you with my Bible. Let us all come into the circle."

"All right, we will examine the Gospel of Jesus Christ from the Bible, principle by principle. In order to have a clear understanding concerning this, it will be necessary for us to go back to the days of our Father Adam. Through the transgression of our

first parents, death came upon all the human family, and mankind could not of themselves overcome the same and obtain immortality. To substantiate this, see first, second and third chapters of Genesis, Romans 5th chapter and 12th verse, and I Corinthians 15th chapter and 21st and 22nd verses. But in order that they should not perish, God sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to satisfy this broken law and to deliver mankind from the power of death. (John iii:16; Romans v:8; John iv:9.) And as all became subject to death by Adam, so will all men be resurrected from death through the atonement of Christ (I Cor. xv:20-23; Rom. v:12-19), and will stand before the judgment seat of God to answer for their own sins and not for Adam's transgression. (Acts xvii:31; Rev. xx:12-15; Matt. xvi:27.) Am I right as far as I have gone?"

"Yes," said the doctor, "I have been following you with your quotations, and find them correct. Proceed."

"Then I have proved one of the principles of some of the so-called Christians incorrect, for they do not believe that the wicked will have the same chance of resurrection as the righteous. Jesus Christ did not die for our individual sins, except on condition that we conform to the plan he marked out, which will bring us a remission of our sins. The only way we can prove that we love him is by keeping his commandments (John xiv:15); therefore, if we say we love God and keep not his commandments, we are liars and the truth is not in us. (I John ii:4.) I think I have proved to your satisfaction that there is something defective in their understanding of the attributes of God, and I think I can prove also that they do not keep his commandments. Christ has given us to understand two things which you must remember while on this search after the 'kingdom of God.' First, that we must follow him; secondly, that when he left his disciples he was to send them the Comforter that would lead them into all truth; therefore we must follow Christ and accept all the principles which were taught by his disciples while in possession of the Holy Spirit, though it should prove the whole world to be in error."

"Thus far your arguments are reasonable, also in accordance with Holy Writ; and as there is no other name given us except Jesus Christ whereby we can be saved (Acts iv:12), you may now

lay before us the conditions; but give us chapter and verse, as I said before, that we may know you speak correctly."

"We will now examine into the conditions; but first remember that God does not send men into the world for the purpose of preaching contrary doctrines, for this always creates confusion, and God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. (I Cor. xiv:33.) Paul has said if any man teach another Gospel let him be accursed. (Gal. i:8, 9.) The first condition is this: To believe there is a God (not the kind mentioned in the English prayer-book), but the God that created man in his own image, and to have faith in that God and in Jesus Christ whom he has sent."

"Go on," said the party in concert.

"Well," continued Durant, "the kind of faith required is that which will enable a man, under all circumstances, to say, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation.' (Rom. i:16.) This is the kind of faith by which the worlds were framed; by which Noah prepared an ark; by which the Red Sea was crossed as on dry land; by which the walls of Jericho fell; it was by faith that kingdoms were subdued; righteousness was wrought; promises were obtained, and the mouths of lions were closed. (Heb. xi:32, 38.) This faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. x:17), and the lack of this faith and the absence of prayer and fasting caused even the Apostles to fail on one occasion in casting out devils. (Matt. xvii:14, 20.) No wonder, then, that without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. xi:6.) Faith, then, is the first grand stepping-stone to that celestial pathway leading towards salvation. The more we search into eternal truth, the more we discover that God works upon natural principles. All the requirements which he makes of us are very plain and simple. How natural that the principle of faith should be the primary one of our salvation! With what principle are we more familiar? Faith is the first great principle governing all things; but great as it is, it is dead without works. (James ii:14-17.) We must not expect salvation by simply having faith that Jesus is the Christ, for the devils in purgatory are that far advanced. (James ii:19.) In fact, if you will read the entire second chapter of James you will see that faith without works is as dead and helpless as the body after the spirit has departed from it. It is folly to think of gaining exaltation in His presence

unless we obey the principles he advocated (Matt. vii), for no one speaks truthfully by saying he is a disciple of Christ while not observing his commandments. (John viii:31.) In fact, the only way by which man can truthfully say he loves Jesus Christ is by keeping his commandments." (John xiv:12-21.)

"Is it not recorded in Holy Writ," said the doctor, "that if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved?"

"You have referred to the words used by Paul and Silas to the keeper of the prison. These disciples were asked by this jailer what should he do to be saved, and they answered, as you have quoted, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.' Then the disciples immediately laid before them those principles which constitute true belief, and not until this man and his house had embraced the principles taught by those disciples were they filled with true belief and really rejoiced. (Acts xvi:31, 33.) You see by this example that we must not deceive ourselves by thinking that we can be hearers of the word only and not doers." (James i:22, 23.)

"But," said the lawyer, "here is a passage found in the tenth chapter of Romans, which, in my opinion, will be difficult for you to explain. The passage referred to reads as follows: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' Now, then, it looks to me as if salvation is here promised through faith alone. How do you explain it?"

"Very easily. Let us thoroughly examine this passage in all its different phases. In the first place, this letter was written by Paul to individuals who were already members of the church. They had rendered obedience to the laws of salvation, and having complied with those requirements were entitled to salvation, providing their testimony remained within them like a living spring; and in order that they should not become lukewarm, Paul exhorted them to continue bearing testimony of the divinity of Christ, and not let their hearts lose sight of the fact that God had raised his Son from the dead, and inasmuch as they kept themselves in this condition, ^{was} salvation would be theirs. This is the only sensible view one can take of this passage. Unquestionably Paul was speaking to sincere members of the church, who had been

correctly initiated into the fold of Christ, not aliens living 1800 years after."

"That appears to be correct, but further on in the same chapter, we find this expression: 'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' It appears to me here that reference is not made to those who had embraced the Gospel and those who had the faith, but salvation is made general to whomsoever shall call upon the name of the Lord." (Rom. x:13.)

"Exactly, but the next verse gives an explanation so simple that none can fail to understand it: 'How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' In other words, if there is faith, there have been works, and having true faith, no person will remain in that condition without complying with further works of salvation to which that faith urges him."

"I see," said Brown, the other remaining silent but interested; "you are right."

"Now, then, gentlemen," said Durant, "I maintain, as before stated, that faith is the first principle of the Gospel leading to salvation, but it will not bring us to the summit of the ladder—water—without the other principles."

"Well, suppose we accept this as the first round in the ladder, where will we find the second?"

"The second follows, just as naturally as the second step follows the first when a child learns to walk. When faith in God is once created, the knowledge that we have at some time, perhaps many times during our lives, 'done things displeasing to him,' naturally follows immediately, therefore repentance makes its appearance as the second principle of the Gospel. When John came preaching in the wilderness as the forerunner of Christ, his message to the people was, 'Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' (Matt. iii:2.) When Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, it was with a message calling them to repentance. (Mark i:15.) When he chose his disciples and began sending them forth it was to call mankind to repentance. (Mark vi:7-12.) When he upbraided the cities wherein

the most of His mighty works were done, it was because they repented not. (Matt. xi:20.) True repentance is that which will cause him who stole to steal no more; that which will keep corrupt communications from our mouths; that which will cause us to so conduct our walks through life as not to grieve the Spirit of God; that which will cause all bitterness, wrath, anger, and evil speaking to be put away from us, and will make us kind one to another, tenderhearted and forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. (Ephesians iv:28-32.) When he who has committed a sin shall commit it no more, then he has repented with that Godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, and not with the sorrow of the world, bringing with it death. (II Cor. vii:10.) When a sinner thus repents more joy is found in heaven than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. (Luke xv:7.) This, then, is the second round in the Gospel ladder according to the plan given us by the Master, and without it, faith is of no substantial benefit."

"Your reasoning is both logical and just," said Brown, "and no one can find any fault with those doctrines. This world of ours would certainly be more pleasant if these things were followed, and when a person is filled with that kind of faith, and has truly repented, it must be clear that he is entitled to salvation."

"But he must not stop at that," the speaker went on; "there are other principles just as necessary for him to obey. If I am in possession of enough faith to convince me that I have sinned against you, and the knowledge of this causes me sincerely to repent, I must not and cannot rest until I am satisfied I have your forgiveness for the wrong. So it is with sinning against God and his laws; he has marked out the path of repentance and it is our duty to follow that divine way until we arrive at the sacred altar of forgiveness. Sin must be forgiven before it can be wiped out, and God in his wisdom selected and placed in his church water baptism for this purpose. It is a means whereby a man can receive remission of sin."

"And do you really believe that baptism brings remission of sin?" queried the lawyer.

"Certainly; provided, however, honest faith and sincere repentance go before it, and the ordinance is administered in the

proper way by one endowed with divine authority; otherwise I believe it is of no avail whatever."

"It seems to me you surround the principle of baptism with more safeguards than anyone else of whom I have ever heard."

"Perhaps I do, and yet it should not be the case. Every principle of the Gospel should be well and carefully protected, and the failure on the part of man to do this is the main cause of so many different so-called plans of salvation existing among us today, when there should be only one true and perfect plan, as found in the days of Christ."

"It does seem strange that there should be so many roads leading, as is claimed, in one direction. I declare, I never thought of that before."

"Well, we will try to cover all those points before we finish. Let us examine this principle. Let us see if the idea of water baptism appears reasonable. The Lord has wisely and kindly selected this form of ordinance for the remission of sins. It was with this object in view that John advocated the principle. (Mark i:4.) Peter promised it on the day of Pentecost. (Acts ii:38.) Saul also received aid to arise and have his sins washed away. (Acts xxii:16.) And so it was taught by different disciples as a means whereby God would remit sins."

"And as you have already stated, there are various modes of baptism among various sects. What is your method?"

"The only correct form is that explained in the Bible. Baptism was performed anciently by immersion, in fact no other mode was thought of until centuries after the day of Christ. The word baptize is from the Greek baptizo or bapto, meaning to plunge or immerse, and such noted writers as Polybius, Strabo, Dion Cassius, Mosheim, Luther, Calvin, Bossuet, Schaaf, Baxter, Jeremy Taylor, Robinson, and others, all agree that with the ancients immersion, and no other form, was baptism. The holy record itself explains the mode so plainly that even a wayfaring man may understand. John selected a certain place on account of there being much water. (John iii:23.) Christ himself was baptized in a river, after which he came up out of the water. (Mark i:5-10.) Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water (Acts viii:38, 39), and Paul likens baptism to the burial and resurrection X

of Christ, dying from sin, buried in water, and resurrection to a new life. (Rom. vi:3-5.) Jesus declares that a man must be born of the water as well as of the Spirit. (John iii:5.) By being immersed we are born of the water, and we cannot liken baptism to a birth when performed in any other way. How mankind can accept any other form, in the face of all these facts, is more than I can account for. I think enough has been said to show that I am correct in my views regarding the object and mode of baptism, so now let us inquire who are proper subjects."

"Why, all who have souls to save, I suppose," said the doctor.

"Yes, providing they have obeyed the two principles already mentioned; that is, faith and repentance; for Christ commanded his apostles to teach before baptizing. (Matt. xxviii:19, 20.) The candidate must believe before he can be baptized. (Mark xvi:16.) Before Philip baptized the people of Samaria they believed the Gospel as he taught it. (Acts viii:12.) When the eunuch asked for baptism at the hands of this same disciple, Philip answered: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest? (Acts viii:37.) All persons, then, who are capable of understanding, are fit subjects for baptism as soon as they believe and have repented. None are exempt, not even was Cornelius, who was so generous that a report of his good deeds reached the throne of God. His prayers were so mingled with faith that they brought down an angel from heaven; yet through baptism alone was it possible that he could gain membership in the fold of Christ. (Acts x.) We see, then, that all, except little children, are proper subjects for this ordinance, provided, as stated, they have faith, and have truly repented of their sins."

"And do you claim that little children are exempt?" said the doctor.

"I do; baptism for the remission of sins, and little children, being free from sin, are of necessity exempt."

"I do not see how you make that doctrine accord with the teachings of the Bible. Did not Jesus say, 'Suffer little children to come unto me?'"

"He did, but instead of administering the ordinance of baptism to them he took them in His arms and blessed them, declaring at the same time that they were pure and free from sin

like unto those who are in the kingdom of heaven. A little child is free from sin, is pure in heart, in fact, is the great example of goodness which Christ points out for us to follow. (Mark x:13-16.) Baptism, then, is for people who are old enough to embrace it intelligently, not for children who cannot understand its significance, and who already belong to the kingdom of heaven.

“We have now examined three of the fundamental principles of the Gospel of salvation. There is one more that I wish to touch upon, after which we will discuss a subject that is of more interest to you, perhaps, than any of these. The principle which I now wish to speak of is the gift of the Holy Ghost, which in olden times always followed obedience to the principles we have discussed, and when once received brought with it some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. When the first sermon was delivered after the crucifixion of Christ, at the time when the apostles were endowed with power from on high, a multitude of people were pricked in their hearts, and asked Peter and the rest of the apostles what they should do. Peter answered this all-important question; and so far as authority to do so was concerned, we must admit that he, of all men at that peculiar time, was fully capable, for he was in possession of the keys of the kingdom of God, bestowed upon him by Christ himself. He was the senior apostle, and, with his brethren, had been endowed with power from above. Therefore, he, more than any minister of our day, occupied a place that enabled him to answer correctly, and with authority.”

“You are stating the case properly, but what did he tell them?” queried the man of law.

“His answer is found in the second chapter of Acts, beginning with the 38th verse. You will observe that as soon as he discovered that they had faith, he taught them repentance, then baptism for the remission of sins, and followed these doctrines with a promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

“Yes, commencing at the verse mentioned, it says: ‘Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.’ ”

"But how were they to receive the Holy Ghost?"

"By the laying on of hands. When Peter went down into Samaria for the purpose of bestowing this gift on those whom Philip had baptized, he did it by the laying on of hands. (Acts viii:17.) Ananias conferred it upon Paul in the same manner. (Acts ix:17.) And Paul did the same in the case of those who were baptized at Ephesus (Acts xix:2-6); and when people received this birth of the Spirit (John iii:5), they also received the promised blessings; they were entitled to the signs which he promised would follow, for, said he, 'These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.' (Mark xvi:17, 18.) We have now discovered the conditions: faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, with the promise of Christ that the signs shall follow."

"You must remember, my friend, that the signs were only given in order to establish the church in the days of the apostles; but now they are dispensed with and no longer needed."

"To the law and the testimony," replied Durant, "and give me chapter and verse to substantiate the assertion you have just made."

"If you will read the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians, you will learn that 'whether there be prophecies they shall fail, and whether there be tongues they shall cease.' "

"If you will take pains to read the two verses following, you will see that 'we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' My friend, instead of this quotation proving that these things are done away, it establishes the assertion that they shall remain until perfection shall come. Surely no reasonable man will say that we have come to perfection."

"I have understood that these gifts were no longer needed. This certainly is the conclusion that the ministers of the day have come to."

"But this is not surprising to me, for this good old Bible declares that the time will come when the people will turn from sound doctrines to fables." (II Tim. iv:4.)

"I must admit that you have convinced me that baptism is a necessity, and when I am baptized, the ordinance will be performed in the proper manner," said the doctor.

"I am pleased to learn that, but I may have another surprise for you yet. May I ask, who do you intend shall baptize you?"

"My minister, I suppose; why?"

"If the words of the Bible be true, there may be a doubt as to whether your minister is authorized to baptize you."

"Do you mean that these men, ministers of the Gospel, have no authority to officiate in that ordinance? I wonder what you will undertake next, but proceed, for I am now prepared for surprises."

"I assure you, my dear sir, I only wish to refer to a few doctrines from the Bible which are necessary to be understood by you in order that you may obtain eternal life. Thus far we have only examined the first principles of the Gospel, but now we will speak of the officers whom Christ placed in His Church, and learn by what means men receive authority to act in the name of God. Paul tells us that God has placed 'first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after which gifts of healing,' etc. (I Cor. xii:28), and says the work is built upon the foundation of apostles. (Eph. ii:20.) He furthermore declares that these officers have been placed in the Church for the work of the ministry, and will remain until we all come to a knowledge of the truth. (Eph. iv:11-13.) Have all mankind come to a knowledge of the truth? If not, why has the Church dispensed with the officers that God placed in it for the purpose of bringing all to a unity of the faith? Paul tells us that these officers were placed in the church to keep us from being tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine which is taught by man. (Eph. iv:12-14.) At the present time, when men declare that they have no need of apostles or prophets, they are divided, and subdivided, and in fact carried about by every doctrine that is promulgated—as Paul saw that they would be, if inspired apostles and prophets were not found to lead them. In losing these officers, the Church lost her authority, together with all her gifts and graces, and the so-called Christian Churches today are disrobed of all her beautiful garments; and even those who pretend to defend her are crying out that her

gifts, graces and ordinances are useless in this age of the world. Did Christ establish the true order or did he not? We say he did and would ask, has any man a right to change it? And if any man, or even an angel from heaven should alter it in the least, will he not come under the condemnation that Paul uttered when he said: "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed?" (Gal. i:8.) Christ placed these officers and the ordinances in the Church for the perfecting of the Saints; and any one teaching contrary to this is a perverter of the Gospel, and an anti-Christ in the full meaning of the word. The difference between the Church of Christ on the one hand and the Catholic Church, with all her posterity composing the whole Protestant world on the other hand, amounts to this: One had apostles, prophets, etc., who led the church by inspiration or by divine revelation; while the others have learned men to preach learned men's opinions; have colleges to teach divinity, instead of the Holy Ghost; instead of preaching the Gospel without hire, their ministers must have large salaries each year, and they are not certain of the doctrines which they teach, when they should be in possession of the gift of knowledge, prophecy and revelation. Now then, in what church do we find apostles and prophets?"

The doctor replied, "There are none; but you must remember there must be a preacher, for 'how shall they hear without a preacher?' " (Rom. x:14.)

"And in the next verse he asks, 'how shall they preach except they be sent?' This same apostle says that no man is to take the honor unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron. (Heb. v:4.) Aaron was called by revelation (Ex. iv:14-17); hence we see that no man is to preach the Gospel except he be called by revelation from God. As I said, instead of men being called by revelation—as the Bible declares they should be—in our day they argue that God has not revealed himself for almost eighteen hundred years. Go and ask your minister if he has been called by revelation, and he will tell you that such manifestations are not needed now, which assertion I think will prove to you that he has no authority to baptize for the remission of sins."

"But did not Jesus say, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel?' "

“He did, but was he then talking to modern ministers? When he gave his apostles authority to preach, did that give all men who feel disposed to take the honor unto themselves the same authority? He gave his apostles to understand that they had not chosen him but he had chosen them (John xv:16); but in this day men reverse the condition. Then again, he sent his servants into the world to preach his Gospel without purse or scrip. (Luke x:4.) Paul says his reward is this, ‘That when I preach the Gospel I may make the Gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the Gospel.’ (I Cor. ix: 18.) Now, go and ask your minister if he does the same, and I think that you will find that he must have a salary.”

“Then what has become of the Gospel?” said the lawyer.

“Paul says that the coming of Jesus Christ will not be, save there be ‘a falling away’ (II Thes. ii:3), and that ‘in the last days perilous times shall come.’ (II Tim. ii:1.) People ‘will not endure sound doctrine,’ but will ‘heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and shall turn from the truth to fables (Tim. iv:3, 4), and will have a form of godliness, but will deny the power thereof.’ (II Tim. iii:5.) Peter also says these false teachers will make merchandise of the souls of men. (II Peter ii:1-3.) They are doing so by demanding a salary for preparing sermons to tickle the people’s itching ears. Micah iii:11 says, ‘The heads thereof judge for reward and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, ‘Is not the Lord among us?’ Now, my friends, do not the different sects of the day present us with a literal fulfillment of all these sayings? Have they not transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance and broken the everlasting covenant? (Isaiah xxiv:5.) John Wesley in his 94th sermon, referring to the condition of the Church after it had departed from the right way and lost the gifts, says, ‘The real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church was because the Christians were turned heathens again and had only a dead form left.’ ”

“It would appear, then, that God has forsaken mankind and left us without any hope,” said Mr. Marshall.

“No. He has not; but this falling away is the result of mankind forsaking God, by changing His Gospel and departing from

its teachings, as I have already shown. But he has promised through his servants, that there would be a dispensation when he would gather together all things in Christ (Eph. i:10), and would restore all things which he has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts iii:20, 21.) This dispensation was called the dispensation of the fullness of times. (Eph. i:10.) Daniel, who received by revelation the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, saw what would take place in later times, when the God of heaven would set up a kingdom. (Dan. ii:44.) John, the revelator, while on the desolate island, Patmos (some ninety years after Christ), saw how this Gospel would be restored. Namely, that an angel would bring it from heaven (Rev. xiv:6), and Christ says it 'shall be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.' (Matt. xxiv:14.) As God is always the same, and has but one plan for the redemption of the human family, we may expect to see the same Gospel with like promises preached in a similar way. Where do we find it as it existed anciently? But as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt. xxiv:37; Luke xvii:26, 27.) Noah was sent by the Lord to foretell the coming of the flood, but the people rejected his testimony; in fact, whenever God has revealed His mind and will to man in days gone by, the world, instead of receiving the same, have rejected the message and said all manner of evil concerning the prophets, and in many instances have killed them, as was the case with Christ himself. Now then, my friends, we are living in the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God is gathering together all things in Christ. An angel has come from the heavens and brought the everlasting Gospel, and on the 6th day of April, 1830, God—through revelation to man—organized the Church of Jesus Christ, in the exact pattern of the true Church, as it existed in the days of Christ, with apostles and prophets, and since that day the servants of God have been traveling through the world preaching the same, as a witness that the end will soon come. They call upon mankind to exercise faith in God our Eternal Father, and in his Son Jesus Christ; also to repent of and turn from their sins, and be baptized by one who has been called of God by revelation, and receive the laying on of hands for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost. As servants of God they then prom-

ise that the convert shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or man (John vii:17); and, furthermore, that the signs which followed the believers in the days of the ancient apostles will follow the believer at the present time, for the same cause will always produce the same effect. My friends, as a servant of God, I call upon you to obey these principles and you shall have the promised blessings. I am an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My home is in Salt Lake City, Utah."

The listeners were very much surprised, but those who read the quotations from the Bible were not slow to inform Mr. Durant that the Good Book substantiated his argument. Thanking him for the patient explanation of his belief, each obtained his card containing the articles of faith of his Church, and bidding each other good-night, all retired.

CONCLUSION

Kind reader, a word before we separate; if you are not a member of what is commonly called the Mormon Church, having read the foregoing pages, you must certainly acknowledge that you know more concerning its doctrines, from a "Mormon" standpoint than you ever knew before.

We have tried to present to you, in a plain and very simple manner, some of the first principles of our faith, the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. What do you think of them? Will they, or will they not, stand scrutiny? It is left with you to answer, and as God has blessed you with free agency, it is your privilege to judge and decide.

Do not treat these doctrines indifferently, nor carelessly throw them aside.

Should they be true, the message is of the utmost importance to you. Surrounded with so many proofs, the faith of the Latter-day Saints demands your further investigation.

Books, tracts, and sermons, in great numbers, and within

easy reach, are at your command. Read, listen, investigate! Thousands have done so before, and bear testimony to having received a knowledge of the divine truth, as herein presented.

I part from you with the words of the poet—

“Know this, that every soul is free
To choose his life and what he'll be,
For this eternal truth is given,
That God will force no man to heaven.

“He'll call, persuade, direct aright—
Bless him with wisdom, love and light—
In nameless ways be good and kind,
But never force the human mind.

“Freedom and reason make us men;
Take these away, what are we then?
Mere animals, and just as well
The beasts may think of heaven or hell.”

L. D. S. Sunday Services
10:00 A. M. and 7:30 P. M.
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Masonic Temple at 9th Ave. and Judah
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